

This is BILK # 50 - November 1992 - I've now moved and have a new address: Hohenheimer Str. 60, W-7306 Denkendorf. Letters to the old address will reach me for some time, but it's best to write to me here. Subs are still DM 15 per year.

BEHEMOTH:

- Loch Ness: The German satire magazine, referring to the recent project Urquhart, quoted Nic Witchell: "With the years, I have become more cynical and sceptical regarding Nessie". (Titanic, Sept 92, p.10) It seems I'm not the only Nessie enthusiast who has changed his views on the monster. A report in the "Rheinpfalz" (August 13) on a German conference of the Society for Scientific Exploration in Munich mentioned that member Henry Bauer has written a book "on the evidence that there are actually living fossils in the cold and deep Scottish lakes". But the final revelation on Nessie came with a report in the German tabloid Bild am Sonntag (Aug 23, p.10). I quote: "58 years ago a tourist took a sensational picture of Nessie, the famous Scottish lake monster. Now Lambert Wilson, 86, admitted: 'I was 'Nessie''. Wilson, a theatre conductor and excellent swimmer: 'I bought a serpent's head in a shop, built a monster with eye holes in the neck and swam around in the lake'. Tourists fell for the trick". It is generally supposed that Nessie surfaces in summer, but it is more exotic theories on her identity that make news each year.

- Murtensee: I briefly printed information supplied by A Trottman on recent sightings there in the last Bilk. The Murtensee, with a surface of 23 km² is 40m deep and situated 430m above sea level. It is connected to the Neuenburger See (Lac du Neuchatel) by the river Brogne, and is famous in archaeological circles for the prehistoric lake dwellings excavated on the shores. The newspaper report I quoted said the witnesses had thought what they had seen had been giant catfish. I was sceptical, but I have found a note in my files, from the Süddeutsche Zeitung, April 24, 1971, p.10c, that an angler, R Fasnacht, caught a 2.10m/7ft catfish in the Murtensee. The catfish, therefore, are real, even though I still believe the witnesses observed a boat wake.

- Seljordsvannet, Norway. This lake in southern Norway has a monster legend. The oldest reports go back 200 years, and the locals are now having thoughts of promoting "Selma" as Norway's rival to Nessie. Local hoteliers want to transform the (still tranquil?) lake into a tourist resort with hotels, boat safaris and souvenir shops. Selma, observed for the first time in the 18th century, resembles a giant serpent with a length of 30m/100 ft. The head is that of a horse or elk. Nobody has yet managed to take a photograph of Selma, but there is already a "blurred videotape". (Mannheimer Morgen, 26 Sept., p.11) The water-horse is an ancient folk motif, identified as standard folk, lore by Meurger and as horse-headed whale by Heuvelmans.

- Bibliography: - Chris Hernandez of Miami was surprised when his car wouldn't start. Opening the bonnet, he discovered a 2m serpent coiled around the motor (Rheinpfalz, 8 July). - Der Journalist, Sept 1992, p. 52, has a feature on the "Neue Spezial", the German version of the Weekly World News. The article mentions several fake UFO stories as well as the now famous Nessie-capture hoax. - Dr Klaus Ulrich, professor of Zoology at Mainz University, is a world expert on dragons. A large article, albeit with tongue in cheek, in the Sonntag Aktuell reports the results of the professor's research: some of his dragonology seems serious, like pointing out some Renaissance dragon quotes, or that dragons cannot have been dinosaurs, more likely giant serpents, but the funny stuff comes in like: dragons could fly despite their aerodynamics. I've never heard of the professor and his research and will contact him: from the article it seems the professor covered all from Christian to Chinese dragons. - Strange 10 on Loch Ness: p.28, 30, 31, 34. Wisconsin lake monsters: p.45. - Andreas Trottman has supplied several recent Nessie sightings: more in the next Bilk.

ISIS

- I shortly mentioned the death of B-movie director Jack Arnold. My source was the Rheinpfalz, Aug 5, and it says that Arnold died on March 17, 1992 at the age of 75 in Los Angeles.

- Water gods and goddesses: The idea of the mermaid and merman certainly developed from pagan ideas of water spirits and lake/river/sea-gods. Two recent discoveries give evidence of our forefather's water cults. The Berliner Morgen-

post, Sept 7, p.24, gave a SAD news item dated LONDON, Sept 7, on the "earliest place of worship", a lake close to Tlokwow, 210 kms north of Warsaw, Poland. Experts of the Warsaw Institute for Archaeology and Ethnology found a wooden platform surrounded by wooden figures. They had obviously been thrown into the lake as a sacrifice to a lake god. The site is said to be 12 000 years old. The article refers to bronze-age, neolithic and iron-age water cults and points out that the modern habit of throwing coins into a fountain is a relict of these cults. The Stuttgarter Zeitung, Sept 7, p.16 and Süddeutsche Zeitung, Sept 7, p. 11 had AP reports on the discovery of a Phoenician temple to Aphrodite at Idalion in Cyprus. Aphrodite, we remember, was the goddess of beauty who came out of the ocean foam. Her lover, according to Greek myth, was Adonis. University of Arizona archaeologists who excavated this early temple found that the goddess had a companion god in the temple, called Adoni in old Cyprian. This turned in Greek to Adonis and means nothing but "Lord". We still have the word in the biblical phrase God Adonai. The two reports I have do not say if "the Lord" Reshef Mikal was an sea god too, but I don't think so. However, the legend of Aphrodite coming out of the sea may be due to the fact that the seafaring Phoenicians built her first temple at Idalion, 32 km off Nicosia, on the sea shore.

● Bibliography: F. de Sarre's reconstruction of the aquatic state of man's earliest evolution in "Bipedia" 9, Sept 92, pp. 13-16. - Myself on similarities between UFO occupants and water hominids in "Strange" # 10, pp.13 & 51. On p.14 of Strange we have a new mermaid sighting from Maryland.

LEVIATHAN

● Leatherback Turtle: My sources are the Stuttgarter Zeitung, Aug 22, p.114; Mannheimer Morgen, Aug 22, p. 11 and Süddeutsche Zeitung, Aug 22, p.11. A 333 cwt turtle, more than 2 m in length, has been caught by Arild Olsen, Captain of a Norwegian trawler, who fished it at the polar circle. Biologist Per Pethon said the creature were 13000 km off its natural habitat, the Gulf of Mexico. He regarded the capture as a "sensation" and thought it had lost orientation in the Gulf Stream. I recall a note in Science Frontiers years ago that said that leatherback turtles all migrate from Mexico to Norway, feeding on jellyfish. Certainly they regularly appear at the British coast around August and September. Is this no longer accepted biology, or was Mr Pethon badly informed? Expert?

KRAKEN:

● Atlantic Ocean: Rüdiger Nehberg, German environmentalist, crossed the Atlantic in a nutshell in November 1987. In his book "Im Tretboot über den Atlantik", Hamburg: Kabel 1988, p.295, he briefly gives an account of a late-night sighting in the light of his torch: "In this moment, two eyes clearly stared at me. A shark? I shine a light at them. Big as a fist and round. Like a giant owl. Then they close and disappear. The only thing I need is a visiting Kraken! I am afraid. The largest known squid had a length of 22m. That means a 11m arm. Add to this they come to the surface at night and have the best eyes of the animal kingdom."

● Expedition: Just as Peter Benchley's giant squid novel "Das Biest" has been published in German, the bare-breasts-tabloid Praline (July 9, p.47) had an article on "American scientists" who try to catch one. The tabloid refers to a Welt am Sonntag article, but gives little details, only the usual references on plate-like suckers, 60m/200ft monsters, 40 cm eyes and duells between squids and sperm whales. They live in depths of 1000 m, nobody has ever seen them (but see Nehberg, above...) and American deep sea scientists will try to find Architeuthis off the Bermudas. Proof for giant squids, the mag adds, came in 1870, when fishermen hacked the arm off a giant off Newfoundland. Also, their remains were found in the stomachs of sperm whales, and scars of the sucker's on the whale's skin.

WHALES: ● The Saga of a white whale in the Black Sea who made the Turkish sea port of Sinop his home was widely treated in the papers, after having been seen for 1 1/2 months off Turkey, it was caught and brought back to Sevastopol Zoo in the CIS, from where it had escaped. (taz, Feb 17, p.20; Rheinpfalz Feb 20; Berliner Zeitung, March 28, p.32) ● 6 porpoises stranded near Sylt, Germany, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, June 27 ● 60 porpoises stranded at Seal Rocks, Australia (Mannheimer Morgen, July 15, p.10 + many other papers) ● Freddie, the Northumberland dolphin, and alleged sexual contact with him, Observer, March 22, p.2 ● 200 Pilot whales stranded at the East Coast of Tasmania (Mannheimer Morgen, 28 Sept, p.16).

SHARKS: ● Bad time for sharks in the Mediterranean Sea: a 2.5m White Shark was caught by Italian fishermen in the Adriatic Sea (Rheinpfalz, March 20), while a few days later a second one was rammed and killed by the navigation instruments of the French navy ship Maestrale (Rheinpfalz, March 25).